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US links Iran with plot to kill Saudi envoy

Tehran has rejected the allegations and complained to the UN of politically motivated "warmongering".

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US authorities have charged two Iranians in a "plot directed by elements of the Iranian government" to kill the Saudi Arabian ambassador to the US as part of a major "terror" attack.

Eric Holder, the US attorney general, said on Tuesday that factions within the Iranian government were involved in the plot.

"The criminal complaint unsealed today exposes a deadly plot directed by factions of the Iranian government to assassinate a foreign ambassador on US soil with explosives," he said.

"Through the diligent and coordinated efforts of our law enforcement and intelligence agencies, we were able to disrupt this plot before anyone was harmed. We will continue to investigate this matter vigorously and bring those who have violated any laws to justice."

Holder said the plot was "conceived, sponsored and directed from Iran".

Iran rejects allegations

Iran's UN ambassador has voiced outrage and complained of politically motivated "warmongering" by the US.

"The Iranian nation seeks a world free from terrorism and considers the current US warmongering and propaganda machine against Iran as a threat not just against itself but to the peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region," Mohammad Khazaee said in a letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

"Iran strongly denies the untrue and baseless allegations over a plan to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to Washington," said Ramin Mehmanparast, foreign ministry spokesman, on Press TV. "It is a comedy show fabricated by America."



According to the US, the alleged Iranian plot also involved an attack on the Saudi and Israeli embassies in Washington.

Saudi Arabia branded the alleged plot to assassinate its ambassador as "despicable", saying it violated "the principles of humanity". **Arbabsiar was arrested on September 29 at New York's JFK International Airport [Reuters]**

"The attempted plot is a despicable violation of international norms, standards and conventions and is not in accord with the principles of humanity," the Saudi embassy in Washington said in a statement.

In Washington, the Mexican embassy issued a statement suggesting the two countries cooperated closely.

"From the very first moment, Mexico and the US exchanged information and acted in a coordinated way," said the embassy.

The US has filed criminal charges against Manssor Arbabsiar, a 56-year-old naturalised US citizen holding both Iranian and US passports, and Gholam Shakuri, an Iran-based member of Iran's Quds Force, the Justice Department said.

A federal criminal complaint in New York said the two are also charged with conspiring to use a weapon of mass destruction.

It said the Saudi ambassador was in the US when the death plot was supposed to have been carried out.

Shakuri remains at large, while Arbabsiar was arrested on September 29 at New York's John F Kennedy International Airport. He is to make his first appearance on Tuesday before a federal court in Manhattan.

Shakuri faces a maximum potential sentence of life in prison if convicted of all the charges.

The case, called Operation Red Coalition, began in May when an Iranian-American from Corpus Christi, Texas, approached a US informant seeking the help of a Mexican drug cartel to assassinate the Saudi ambassador, according to counter-terrorism officials.

The Iranian-American thought he was dealing with a member of a Mexican drug organisation, according to documents